

Members

Rep. Charlie Brown, Chairperson  
Rep. Linda Lawson  
Rep. Dan Stevenson  
Rep. Ralph Ayres  
Rep. Daniel Dumezich  
Rep. Dean Mock  
Sen. Sue Landske, Vice-Chairperson  
Sen. Joseph Zakas  
Sen. Ron Alting  
Sen. Rose Antich  
Sen. William Alexa  
Sen. Earline Rogers  
William Pemberton  
Duane W. Dedelow



# NORTHWEST INDIANA TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION

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Authority: P.L. 149-1999

## MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

Meeting Date: September 25, 2001  
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.  
Meeting Place: Library Conference Center, Indiana  
University Northwest, 3400  
Broadway, Gary, Indiana  
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana  
Meeting Number: 3

**Members Present:** Rep. Charlie Brown, Chairperson; Rep. Dan Stevenson; Rep. Dean Mock; Sen. Sue Landske, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Joseph Zakas; Sen. Rose Antich; Sen. William Alexa; Sen. Earline Rogers.

**Members Absent:** Rep. Linda Lawson; Rep. Daniel Dumezich; Sen. Ron Alting; William Pemberton; Duane W. Dedelow; Rep. Ralph Ayres.

Chairperson Charlie Brown called the meeting to order at 10:16 a.m. The members of the Commission and staff introduced themselves to the audience. Chairperson Brown announced that the meeting would hear testimony regarding the Gary/Chicago airport and the West Lake corridor. He stated that the Chambers of Commerce and the business community in the region had been invited to attend this meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

## 1. Gary/Chicago Airport

Harold W. Miles, Executive Director of the Portage Chamber of Commerce, told the Commission that the Portage Chamber supports the Gary/Chicago Airport for two reasons. Most major industries in Portage have their home offices outside of Portage and need fast transportation for their executives. Second, Portage has a new industrial park of 385 acres, and it needs to attract diversified industries to reduce the dependence on the steel industry. For those industries to flourish, they need adequate transportation.

Chairperson Brown introduced Representative Chester Dobis of Merrillville, in attendance, the longest serving legislator in the northwest delegation. He also introduced Jerome Prince, a member of the Gary City Council, who expressed his and the Council's support for the Airport.

Chairperson Brown then introduced Dr. William Staehle, President of the Gary/Chicago Airport Authority. Dr. Staehle commented that since September 11 security in the airport has increased and been made visible to the public. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has mandated that vehicles be kept away from airports, and the new mandates have lead to new financial concerns. The FAA may take over baggage and security functions. Pan Am Airlines is back and running and a contract was let two weeks ago to prepare for rail relocation analysis. There still are plans to extend the runway. Chairperson Brown queried as to why the Commission, which was to have held this meeting at the Airport before September 11, was asked to hold the meeting at another location for security reasons, and yet another public meeting has been held there. Dr. Staehle explained that the Chicago-Gary Regional Airport Authority met in a public area of the terminal that was not a secured area, and that the authorizing Compact for the Airport Authority requires that some meetings be held in Indiana. The topic of the meeting was the expansion of O'Hare and Midway airports. Chairperson Brown expressed concern that the Commission had not received notice of this public meeting.

Senator Rogers fees that there will be a steady and increased need for air transportation. Dr. Staehle said that carriers are hurting financially from the loss in use, and that airports will do all that they can to make themselves as safe as possible. In response to a question from Senator Alexa, Dr. Staehle answered that because of the difference in standards of security across the country, it may be good to have the federal government take over security aspects. Locally, the Gary/Chicago Airport has security provided by Pan Am, and at O'Hare the airlines provide their own staff or contract out. In Gary, there is a ten year background check for all employees before they may be employed.

Chairperson Brown then read a statement of support concerning the Gary/Chicago Airport from Federal Congressman Peter Visclosky. (A copy of the statement is provided as Exhibit A.)

Jeffery D. Adams, a resident of Gary, expressed his desire to see high speed rail in the area, as he feels that there is congestion on I-80/94. He also feels that high speed rail would create more jobs.

Joe Hero, a resident of St. John, urged that a remote site be found for an airport, like that of Tokyo. He believes that to set an airport far out can help with security. A discussion ensued between Mr. Hero and Representative Stevenson concerning the value of airports' distance from cities when any airplane bent on sabotage could be at a city in a matter of a few minutes. Senator Antich urged that an airport be kept in Gary to assist in revitalization.

## 2. West Lake Corridor

Gerald R. Hanas, General Manager of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), and John N. Parsons, Director of Marketing of NICTD, submitted the Presentation 9-25-01 and the West Lake Corridor Major Investment Study to the Commission. (A copy of the presentation and study are provided as Exhibits B and C.) They provided a Powerpoint presentation with commentary.

NICTD provides commuter rail service from South Bend through the Chicago line to the Randolph Street station in Chicago. The job base in Lake and Porter counties is doubled by the access to Chicago provided by NICTD. Freight service runs on its tracks and provides income to NICTD. Some of the rolling stock is 18 or 19 years old, so several of the cars are out of service for up to 12 weeks at a time for overhauling. Conversion to AC propulsion for more efficiency and operating performance is planned. Although NICTD has had some degradation of on-time performance, in response to a query from Chairperson Brown, Mr. Hanas stated that NICTD's performance is comparable to other metropolitan carriers. As NICTD began in 1908 as the Indiana Lakeshore Railroad, various bridges necessarily are in the process of repair or replacement. The signal and communication systems also are being modernized. Another parking lot was added in Hammond last year, and high level platforms there and at other stations will save loading time.

Future plans include expansion of service to Lowell or Valparaiso. In order to increase service, alternative funding sources must be pursued. Currently, some capital financing is from a bond. Mr. Hanas stated that income from sales tax is one of the most common funding for rail services, in addition to the gasoline tax. Illinois, for example, has created the "Illinois First" initiative, expected to raise over \$12 billion dollars in five years; its Metra system is investing \$400 million dollars in new cars. In response to a question from Representative Stevenson, Mr. Hanas stated that no operating dollars flow from the four Indiana counties in which NICTD operates. Senator Alexa asked about a line to the Gary/Chicago airport; Mr. Hanas showed a slide of the proposed link to the station at Kline Avenue. In order to accomplish this, the E.J. & E. line has to be moved to the west.

Senator Antich asked whether there has been an increase in the tardiness of trains. Mr. Hanas acknowledged that there had been three major incidents since August; one occurred at the Hegewisch station in Cook County, Illinois and backed up rush hour. A train typically has over 900 seats on an eight car train. Senator Rogers asked about ridership costs and whether an increase could be an option; Mr. Hanas said that NICTD tries to keep track with Illinois' Metra. 1996 was the last fare increase and, for example, a Gary to Chicago monthly pass is \$140. Mr. Hanas hopes that at some point fares would be 100% of operating funds. He would like the train on-time statistics to be more reliable before a fare increase is proposed. In light of recent current events, Senator Landske asked about security; Mr. Hanas said that permanent security in large terminals is anticipated.

Mr. Hanas also furnished the Commission with a copy of Rail magazine (spring 2001 edition; a copy is provided as Exhibit D.)

### 3. Old Business-Indiana Department of Transportation

Kathy Noland of the Indiana Department of Transportation appeared in response to a request from the September 13, 2001 meeting of the Commission. She furnished the Commission with copies of Projects to be Let in Lake, LaPorte or Porter Counties and a packet with the first page entitled Laporte District. (A copy of each document is provided as Exhibits E and F, respectively.) The documents provide a breakdown of the progress on projects in the three county northwest area of the state, and are based on future

appropriations.

Chairperson Brown reminded the Commission that the next meeting, set for October 25, 2001, at 1:00 p.m., at the office of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Transportation Commission, 6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN. 46368, will be to hear testimony on the topic of the Indiana toll road. Further, he asked the Commission members to contact the staff at the Legislative Services Agency with resolutions or drafts that the staff could prepare for the Commission. As this is the last meeting in calendar year 2001, a vote would have to be taken at the meeting for the General Assembly's consideration of the document in the 2002 session.

Senator Landske asked that a copy of the 2001 session resolution on the topic of the Indiana toll road be forwarded to the Commission. Senator Rogers commended NICTD for furnishing a packet of the presentation today and asked for information from the Gary/Chicago Airport. In response, distribution was made of the Final Draft Master Plan from the airport (see Exhibit G). Dr. Staehle agreed to prepare a digest of the Master Plan and to get it to staff for distribution to the Commission.

Chairperson Brown adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.